ISSN 2039-2117 (online)
ISSN 2039-9340 (print)

Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences
MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy

Vol 5 No 20
September 2014

Hedging Expressions in English and Persian MA and PhD Theses: The Case of Iranian Learners

Marzieh Rezaie

Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran
Email: marziehrezaie83@yahoo.com

Saeed Taki

Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran

Doi:10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n20p2339

Abstract

The use of hedging expressions is one of the important issues in academic writing. This research investigated the type and frequency of hedging expressions used in English MA and Persian MA theses written by the Iranian students, together with the type and frequency of hedging expressions used in English PhD theses and Persian PhD theses written by the Iranian students. For this purpose, a total number of 48 theses were selected. The subjects of the theses were near to each other. Varttala's (2001) model for hedges was used; The results of this study showed some categories of hedges were used more than the other groups. Moreover, the total number of hedges was significantly higher in English MA theses in comparison to Persian MA theses, however, for different categories of hedges used in MA English and Persian theses and PhD English and Persian theses the observed differences were not statistically significant.

Keywords: *academic writing, research community, hedging expressions*

1. Introduction

Mauranen contented that academic world is that of “uncertainties, indirectness, and non-finality” (1997, p. 115). In academic writing, writers use some devices through which they can show their indirectness, doubt, politeness and … while conveying their massages. Hedges are rhetorical devices which have important role in academic writing (Hyland 1996b).

The term "hedge" for the first time was used in Lakoff's article. In Lakoff' opinion, hedging relates to words or phrases “whose job it is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” (Lakoff, 1972, p.471). In Salager Meyer' view (1994), hedging is related to vagueness and fuzziness which is purposeful, it can show the writers' modesty and help authors' to be free from personal involvement , and it can be used for this reason that representing the knowledge with absolute accuracy and quantifying all the data is impossible or unwilling.

Different researchers such as Lachowicz (1981), Prince, Frader, and Bosk (1982), Rounds (1982), Powell (1985), Pindi and Bloor (1986), Skelton (1988), Dubois (1987), Vasquez (1987) agreed that hedges show distance (as cited in Salager-Meyer, 1994). Through the use of hedging expressions, writer maintains a distance between himself / herself and his/her claims (Hyland 1996,b), and when there is a risk that his/her claims to be reject by his/her research community , he/she can protect his/her position by using hedging forms (Hyland, 1998).

Hedges can be considered as politeness devices which in Holmes' (1988, p.22) view, they reflect “deference rather than uncertainty” .Myers (1989) also claims that the hedging expressions are used as the politeness markers in the interaction between writers and readers in an academic discourse context.

In Hübler's opinion, hedging can be an indicator of negative politeness and hedging devices are "diversifying" elements which addresser used to "maximize the emotional acceptability of the propositional content presented to the hearer for ratification"(1983, p.156-159).

However in Varttala's(1999)view, hedges can function as a device for interpersonal positive politeness which can help readers to feel they are part of the academic world(eg. in popularized communication ,communication between specialist writers and non-specialist readers, it can be used as a positive politeness strategy).

Halliday and Hasan (1985) contented that utterances have interpersonal components beside their ideational components. They paid attention to this fact that hedging is not completely a semantic phenomenon but a pragmatic one,

and its functions can be analyzed in discourse.

Salager-Meyer (2000) referred to hedging as a socially constructed phenomenon and contents that hedging knowledge is a linguistic resource which is learned and helps the users to produce a linguistic behaviour which is appropriate and inline with the norms of a specific culture. The use of hedging should be in a way that meets the conventionalized expectations of a special community; conventionalism is one important factor in genre construction (Durán, 2000; as cited in Vass, 2004).

2. The Present Study

Varttala's (2001) model for hedges was used in this study. One of the advantages of this model is that the hedges that were identified by him were sent to the authors of articles in order to understand whether they considered them as hedges. He considered "hedging in broad terms as a strategy by which language users can indicate degrees of less than full commitment toward the accuracy of conceptualizations of the universe"(p.47).He focused on linguistic devices which modifies " group member ship, truth value or, illocutionary force" (P.47). Specifically, in this study the following research questions are tried to be answered:

1. What are the differences between the type and frequency of the hedging expressions as used in English MA theses written by the Iranian students of TEFL and Persian MA these written by the Iranian students of curriculum development?
2. What are the differences between the type and frequency of the hedging expressions as used in English PhD theses written by the Iranian students of TEFL and Persian PhD theses written by the Iranian students of curriculum development?

3. Method

3.1 Corpus

In this study, a total number of 48 theses were selected that include 12 English MA theses and 12 English PhD theses from the department of foreign language teaching and 12 Persian MA theses and 12 Persian PhD theses from the department of education. The English theses were from the field of English teaching and the Persian theses were from the field of curriculum development. All of the theses belonged to one area, education, and the subjects of them were near to each other. These theses were written by Iranian students; therefore, English was their foreign language. The total number of words for English MA theses was 16403, for English PhD theses 15721, for Persian MA theses 20204, and for Persian PhD theses 59919.

3.2 Procedure

In this study, the discussion and conclusion parts from Chapter 5 of English and Persian MA and PhD theses were selected. Then, the different types of hedges were identified .In order to increase the reliability of the results, these theses were read several times by the researcher in order to find hedges and these hedges checked again by another person who had a PhD in language teaching. The frequencies of hedges which occurred per 1000 words were calculated. The reason for calculating the frequencies of hedges occurring per 1000 is that the lengths of English and Persian MA and PhD theses were different; therefore, the limited index of 1000 was used.Chi- square was also used to explore whether the differences observed in the use of hedges among these four groups were significant.

3.3 Data analysis

The examples show how Iranian learners make use of hedges in their theses.

3.3.1 Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are devices which are primarily related to hedging (Salager-Meyer, 1995).

"This **might** be due to the dominance of Persian language ....

Kontororol va nazmdehi, bedin manast keh yadgiran **mitavanand** az in danesh farashenakhti baraye nazm dadan va hedayat kardan raveshhaye yadgiri khod estefadeh konand....

3.3.2 Full verbs

Full verbs are another group which can act as hedges and are used by writers to avoid being too much assertive when there is a possibility that the presented information may not be fully accurate.

3.3.2.1 Nonfactive Reporting Verbs

Nonfactive Reporting Verbs are tentative devices which are used by authors for reporting the other researchers' studies or representing tentative reports of their own work (Varttala, 2001)

" The findings further **suggest** that the relationship .....

Beh in dalayel**, pishnahad mikonannd** ...

3.3.2.2 Tentative Cognition Verbs

This group is regarded as hedges because "the information they introduced is one way or another based on subjective cognitive activity rather than uncontrovertial empirical evidence" (Varttala, 2001, p.122)

" That is, most of the students **think** that ...

Hamchenin daneshjeyan **motagheddand** ...

3.3.2.3 Tentative Linking Verbs

Tentative linking verbs can be considered as hedges because they express the ideas which are expressed by authors.

"They **seem** to apply a heuristic model".

Beh nazar miresad keh khandan ramz goshaie vazheh beh vazheh bashad...

3.3.3 adverbs

3.3.3.1 Probability Adverbs

Probability adverbs can show "degrees of probability between absolute true and false"(Varttala, 2001, p.128).

" It is **likely** to claim that ...

Shayad kasb maharathaye amali va eyni va ... az dalayel in rezayat bishtar bashad

3.3.3.2 Adverbs of Indefinite Frequency

They were used when researchers don't want to represent the exact frequency of action or event in time. According to Varttala (2001) speakers/writers used adverbs of frequency to avoid commitment to "categorical assertion" or to avoid representing "the exact figure" (p.129).

"…metaphorical language would **usually** be treated ...

Ba tavajoh beh natayej fogh mitavan bayan dasht keh ravesh badieh pardazi **beh tor koli** mitavanad dar parvaresh khallagh mofid boodeh

3.3.3.3 Adverbs of Indefinite Degree

Authors used when the exact figure is not clear for them or when there a possibility that if they represent the exact figure they will be rejected and this figure considered wrong.

"The PCL operation was **mostly** employed to highlight predicates".

...va avameli chon angizeh ghabl az vorood beh daneshgah ba estedad , ahdaf va hoviyat afrad **be mizan ghabel tavajohi** dar amadegi anha jahat movafaghiyat tahsili moaser ast

3.3.3.4 Approximative Adverbs

Trough the use of approximative adverbs the writers reduce "the force of verbs"(Varttalla,2001,p.132)

*"LD and TOP were two other marked structures that **almost** always occurred in the formula spoken data .....*

Ba tavajoh beh ankeh nomreh miyangin goroh azmayesh va kontorol dar pish azmoon **taghriban** yeksan bood va tafavot manidari beyn anha vojood nadasht.....

3.3.4 Adjectives

3.3.4.1 Probability Adjectives

Probability adjectives indicate epistemic modality and very much related to many of probability adverbs that are discussed above.

" One **possible** explanation might be that ....

3.3.4.2 Adjectives of Indefinite Frequency

Adjectives of indefinite frequency indicate a tentative representation of frequency of something to avoid commitment to exact number.

"In ESP reading comprehension test, there is a **common** factor shared by ....

....beh in natijeh **koli** dast yaft keh narm afzarhaye amoozeshi keh shamel khodamooz, mashgh, ...natijeh ghabel tavajohi dashtand....

3.3.4.3 Adjectives of Indefinite Degree

Adjectives of indefinite degree are used where the exact degree of something is not represented and only a tentative representation of the degree of it is used.

"The results also revealed... some **considerable** amounts of gains in accuracy disappeared over time".

Gozaresh haseleh az natayej fogh ba natijeh tahghigh hazer dar khosoos afzayesh **ghabel molahezeh** yaddari hamkhanidarad

3.3.4.4 Approximative Adjectives

They are used "draw attention to the approximate nature of information presented" (Varttala, 2001, p.138). In the pot above a **near** linear relationship exists".**"**

Modiran dar arzyabi khod as vaziyat amoozesh elekteronikidaneshkadeh abad sazeman va modiriyat matloob bod molahezat akhlaghi ra dar had **nazdik** beh matloob gorazesh kardand

3.3.5 Nouns

3.3.5.1 Nonfactive Assertive Noun

They have similarities with nonfactive reporting verbs; they can indicate tentativeness and are used in author's reporting of his/ her work or the work of others.

"The results of this study, however, seem to be in contrast with the **suggestions** made by Glucksberg and Mcalone (1999) who believe ....

Harvi (2002) ham serahatan bar in **edea** seheh gozashteh keh karfarmayan va namayandegan anha daeman ezhar midararand danesh amookhtegan baraye moafaghiyat dar arsehe khadamat ejtemai va mashaghel, bish az daneshi keh dar daneshgah be anha arzeh mishavad niyazmand vizhegihaye shakhsi va shakhsiyaty mored niyaz jameeh va bazaar kar hastand

3.3.5.2 Tentative Cognition Nouns

They refer to "mental status" or "mental processes" of writers/speakers whose ideas expressed (Varttala, 2001, p.122).

" …lending support to the **hypothesis** that communicative approaches would satisfy, at least partially, our **expectation** in CALL context as well".

Ostadan va daneshjooyan bar in **bavar** boodand keh barnameh darsi pasokhgoo bayad osool va mafahim danesh takhasosi ra beh hamrah maharathaye boyadi beh goonehi amoozesh dahad keh daneshjooyan ba bahrehmandi anha , betavanand neyaz amoozeshi khod ra dar tool zendegi baravardeh sazand.

3.3.5.3 Nouns of Tentative Likelihood

They show that "although what is said is likely to apply, this may not be invariably or necessary so"(Varttala, 2001, p.142).

" This notion can suggest the **possibility** of re-discussing offline reading comprehension studies to help inform emerging thinking about very basic and important nature of online reading comprehension".

Danesh amoozani keh barnameh darsi beh shekl giri hoviyat farhangi anha komak nakardeh va agahi farhangi lazem ra tajrobeh ya kasb nakardeh bashand **ehtema**l ziyadi vojood darad keh ba avalin barkhord jazb farhang digar shavand.

3.3.6 Clausal Elements

Besides lexical devices clausal elements can be considered as hedges and indicate that the information is tentative. Hyland (1998, p.141; as cited in Varttala, 2001) categorized them under the heading of "non-lexical hedges".

" It would be more considerable **if some instrument d designed to force the subjects to use the strategies they claim to use so that researchers have a more solid basis for conclusion " .**

" **Although the quantitative data showed that the participant significantly improved the sub skill,** the participants perceived vocabulary to be the least improved sub skill in their writing due to the shortages of time " .

Mosharekat karfarmayan dar barnameh darsi da neshgahi, **agar cheh mored tamayol va tavajoh anan boodeh amma az sooye ostadan (3.67) va daneshjooyan (3.78) chandan mored tavajoh gharar nagerefteh ast.**

3.4 Questions

Questions are another group that are considered as hedges by Varttala (2001). In this study, questions were not used in English MA and PHD theses.

Aya moalemin bayad beh vozooh esterategihaye dark matlab ra amoozesh dahand?

3.4.1 Other Hedges

There are other hedges which do not belong to any of these categories of hedges that are mentioned above. Varttala (2001) categorized them as other hedges.

" Thus, it can be concluded that motivation has no bearing effect on general language ability and specific purpose background knowledge or **at least in this study, it didn't proved to be relevant."**

" …**in most cases** the number of conventions problems drastically decreased toward the end of the course."

...**bishtare** karshenasan moafeghand keh moalem maher dar yadgiri khandan va dark matlab baraye **aghlab** koodakan mohem ast.

Leza agarche keh dar hichkodam az meghyasha nesbat tavafogh mojood va matloob beh **hade aghal** 50% mavared ham naresideh ast....

4. Results

4.1 Relative Frequency of Various Categories of Hedges

Regarding the first two research questions, Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 show the total number of frequencies of different types of hedges which were used in English and Persian MA and PhD theses.

Table 1. Relative Frequency of Various Categories of Hedges Used in English MA theses

Hedges	Total No. of Occurrences	Items per 1000	%
Modal Auxiliaries	159	9.693	19.272
Can	62	3.779	7.515
Could	25	1.524	3.030
May	28	1.707	3.393
Might	8	0.487	0.969
Should	10	0.609	1.212
Will	11	0.670	1.333
Would	10	0.609	1.212
Must	5	0.304	0.606
Full Verbs	154	9.388	18.666
Nonfactive Reporting Verbs	88	5.364	10.666
Tentative Cognition Verbs	47	2.865	5.696
Linking Verbs	19	1.158	2.303
Adverbs	115	7.010	13.939
Probability Adverbs	8	0.487	0.969
Adverbs of Indefinite Frequency	34	2.072	4.121
Adverbs of Indefinite degree	32	1.950	3.878
Approximative Adverbs	41	2.499	4.969
Adjectives	255	15.545	30.909
Probability Adjectives	12	0.731	1.454
Adjectives of Indefinite Frequency	17	1.036	2.060
Adjectives of Indefinite Degree	223	13.595	27.030
Approximative Adjectives	3	0.182	0.363
Nouns	23	1.402	2.787
Nonfactive Assertive Nouns	3	0.182	0.363
Tentative Cognition Nouns	9	0.548	1.090
Nouns of Tentative Likelihood	11	0.670	1.333
Clausal Elements	89	5.425	10.787
Questions	0	0	0
Other Hedges	30	1.828	3.636
Total No. of Hedges	825	50.295	100
Total No. of Words	16403	1000	

As it is shown in Tables 1, "adjectives' (N=15.54 per1000), "modal auxiliaries" (N=9.69 per 1000) and "full verbs" (N=9.38 per 1000) were used more frequently in English MA theses. Among "adjectives", "adjectives of indefinite degree" had the highest frequency (N=13.59 per 1000).Among "modal auxiliaries", "can" (N=3.779 per 1000) was used most frequently. Among "full verbs", "nonfactive reporting verbs" (N= 5.36 per 1000) were the most frequently used "full verbs" .However, "questions" were absent in this corpus and after "questions", "nouns" (N= 1.40 per 1000) were the least frequent group of hedges used in English MA theses. Among "nouns", "nonfactive assertive nouns" were used least frequently (N=0.18 per 1000).

Table 3. Relative Frequency of Various Categories of Hedges Used in English PhD Theses

Hedges	Total No. of Occurrences	Items per 1000	%
Modal Auxiliaries	171	10.877	20.454
Can	58	3.689	6.937
Could	21	1.335	2.511
May	18	1.144	2.153
Might	20	1.272	2.392
Should	19	1.208	2.272
Will	22	1.399	2.631
Would	10	.063	1.196
Must	3	0.190	0.358

Full Verbs	163	10.368	19.497
Nonfactive Reporting Verbs	85	4.770	8.971
Tentative Cognition Verbs	55	3.498	6.578
Tentative Linking Verbs	33	2.099	3.947
Adverbs	131	8.332	15.669
Probability Adverbs	7	0.445	0.837
Adverbs of Indefinite Frequency	46	2.926	5.502
Adverbs of Indefinite degree	49	3.116	5.861
Approximative Adverbs	29	1.844	3.468
Adjectives	159	10.113	19.019
Probability Adjectives	27	1.717	3.229
Adjectives of Indefinite Frequency	4	0.254	0.478
Adjectives of Indefinite Degree	120	7.633	14.354
Approximative Adjectives	8	0.508	0.956
Nouns	86	5.470	10.287
Nonfactive Assertive Nouns	34	2.162	4.066
Tentative Cognition Nouns	44	2.798	5.263
Nouns of Tentative Likelihood	8	0.508	0.956
Clausal Elements	98	6.233	11.722
Questions	0	0	0
Other Hedges	28	1.781	3.349
Total No. of Hedges	836	53.177	100
Total No. of words	15721	1000	

As depicted in Tables 3, "modal auxiliaries" (N=10.87 per 1000), "full verbs" (N=10.36 per1000) and "adjectives" (N=10.11 per 1000) were used more than the other groups of hedges in English PhD theses. Among "modal auxiliaries", "can" had the highest frequency (N= 3.68 per1000).Among "full verbs", "nonfactive reporting verbs" were used most frequently in comparison to other groups of full verbs (N=4.770 per1000). Among "adjectives", "adjectives of indefinite degree" were the most frequently used groups of adjectives (7.633 per 1000).However, "questions" were not used in this corpus and after this group "other hedges" (N= 1.78 per 1000) were used least frequently in English PhD theses.

Table 5. Relative Frequency of Various Categories of Hedges Used in Persian MA Theses

Hedges	Total No. of Occurrences	Items per 1000	%
Modal Auxiliaries	103	5.098	17.517
Tavanestan	90	4.454	15.306
Momken Boodan	3	0.148	0.510
Bayestan	6	0.296	1.020
Khastan	4	0.197	0.680
Full Verbs	56	2.771	9.523
Nonfactive Reporting Verbs	18	0.890	3.061
Tentative Cognition Verbs	17	0.841	2.891
Linking Verbs	21	1.039	3.571
Adverbs	51	2.524	8.673
Probability Adverbs	5	0.247	0.850
Adverbs of Indefinite Frequency	14	0.692	2.380
Adverbs of Indefinite degree	22	1.088	3.741
Approximative Adverbs	10	0.494	1.700
Adjectives	254	12.571	43.197
Probability Adjectives	1	0.049	0.170
Adjectives of Indefinite Frequency	4	0.197	0.680
Adjectives of Indefinite Degree	249	12.324	42.346
Approximative Adjectives	0	0	0
Nouns	85	4.207	14.455
Nonfactive Assertive Nouns	55	2.722	9.353

Tentative Cognition Nouns	28	1.385	4.761
Nouns of Tentative Likelihood	2	0.098	0.340
Clausal Elements	26	1.286	4.421
Questions	0	0	0
Other Hedges	13	0.643	2.210
Total No. of Hedges	588	29.103	100
Total No. of Words	20204	1000	

Tables 5 show that "adjectives" (N= 12.57 per 1000), "modal auxiliaries (N= 5.09 per 1000) and "nouns" (N= 4.20 per 1000) occurred more frequently than other groups of hedges in Persian MA theses. Among "adjectives", "adjectives of indefinite degree" were used most frequently (N= 12.32 per 1000). Among "modal auxiliaries", "Tavanestan" had the highest frequency (N= 4.45 per 1000). And among "nouns", "nonfactive assertive nouns" were the most frequently used nouns (N=2.72 per 1000). However, "questions" were not used in Persian MA theses and after this group "other hedges" (N=0.64 per1000) were the least frequently used group of hedges in Persian MA theses.

Table 7. Relative Frequency of Various Categories of Hedges Used in Persian PhD Theses

Hedges	Total No. of Occurrences	Items per 1000	%
Modal Auxiliaries	560	9.345	23.799
Tavanestan	296	4.940	12.579
Momken Boodan	53	0.884	2.252
Bayestan	149	2.486	6.332
Khastan	62	1.034	2.634
Full Verbs	190	3.170	8.074
Nonfactive Reporting Verbs	40	0.667	1.699
Tentative Cognition Verbs	128	2.136	5.439
Linking Verbs	22	0.367	0.934
Adverbs	259	4.322	11.007
Probability Adverbs	38	0.634	1.614
Adverbs of Indefinite Frequency	49	0.817	2.082
Adverbs of Indefinite degree	17	0.283	0.722
Approximative Adverbs	155	2.586	6.587
Adjectives	521	8.695	22.141
Probability Adjectives	10	0.166	0.424
Adjectives of Indefinite Frequency	13	0.216	0.552
Adjectives of Indefinite Degree	484	8.077	20.569
Approximative Adjectives	14	0.233	0.594
Nouns	402	6.709	17.084
Nonfactive Assertive Nouns	102	1.702	4.334
Tentative Cognition Nouns	254	4.239	10.794
Nouns of Tentative Likelihood	46	0.767	1.954
Clausal Elements	290	4.839	12.324
Questions	7	0.116	0.297
Other Hedges	124	2.069	5.269
Total No. of Hedges	2353	39.269	100
Total No. of Words	59919	1000	

As Tables 7 show, "modal auxiliaries" (N= 9.34 per 1000), "adjective" (N= 8.69 per 1000) and "nouns" (N= 6.70 per 1000) were used more frequently in Persian PhD theses. Among "modal auxiliaries", "Tavanestan" (N= 4.94 per 1000) had the highest frequency. Among "adjectives", "adjectives of indefinite degree" (N= 8.07 per 1000) were used most frequently. And among "nouns", "tentative cognition nouns" (N= 4.23 per 1000) were the most frequently nouns. However, "questions" (N= 0.11) were used least frequently in Persian PhD theses.

4.2 Chi- Square Test Results

In order to explore whether the differences in the use of hedges are significant, the Chi – square tests was used. Tables 9

and 10 show the results.

Table 9. Hedges in Persian and English PhD Theses

	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Hedges in Persian and English PhD Theses	2.130	1	0.144
Modal Auxiliaries in English and Persian PhD Theses	0.200	1	0.655
Full Verbs in English and Persian PhD These	3.769	1	0.052
Adverbs in English and Persian PhD Theses	1.333	1	0.248
Adjectives in English and Persian PhD Theses	0.053	1	0.819
Nouns in English and Persian PhD Theses	.333	1	0.564
Clausal Elements in English and Persian PhD These	0.091	1	0.763
Other Hedges in English and Persian PhD Theses	0	1	1

As table 9 shows , As Table 9 shows, the difference seen in the total number of hedges $(x^2 = 2.13, P < 0.05)$, modal auxiliaries $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 0.200, \mathrm{p} < 0.05)$, full verbs $(x^2 = 3.769, p < 0.05)$, adverbs $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 1.333, \mathrm{p} < 0.05)$, adjectives $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 0.053, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$, nouns $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 0.333, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$, clausal elements $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 0.091, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$ and other hedges $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 0, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$ used in English and Persian PhD theses were not statistically significant .The frequency of questions used in English PhD these is 0 and it is 0.116(per 1000 words) for Persian PhD theses therefore Chi-Square test can not be used for this group.

Table 10. Hedges in Persian and English MA Theses

	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Hedges in Persian and English MA Theses	5.582		0.018
Modal Auxiliaries in English and Persian MA Theses	1.667		0.197
Full Verbs in English and Persian MA Theses	3		0.083
Adverbs in English and Persian MA Theses	1.600		0.206
Adjectives in English and Persian MA Theses	0.310		0.577
Nouns in English and Persian MA Theses	1.800		0.180
Clausal Elements in English and Persian MA Theses	2.667		.102
Other Hedges in English and Persian MA Theses	0.333		0.564

As table 10 shows, As Table 10 shows, the difference seen in total number of hedges used in English and Persian MA theses is statistically significant $(x^2 = 5.582, P < 0.05)$. However, there are not a significant difference between the frequency of modal auxiliaries, $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 1.667, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$, full verbs $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 3, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$, adverbs $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 1.6, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$, adjectives $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 0.310, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$, nouns $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 1.8, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$, the clausal elements used in English and Persian MA theses $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 2.667, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$ and other hedges $(\mathrm{x}^2 = 0.333, \mathrm{P} < 0.05)$used in English and Persian MA theses. Moreover, the frequency of questions used in both English and Persian MA theses is 0 therefore Chi-square test can not be used for this group.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The results of this study showed "adjectives", "modal auxiliaries" and "full verbs" were used more frequently in English MA theses. In Persian MA theses, "adjectives", "modal auxiliaries and "nouns" occurred more frequently. Moreover, "modal auxiliaries", "full verbs" and "adjectives" were used more than the other groups of hedges in English PhD theses. And "Modal auxiliaries", "adjective" and "nouns" were more frequently used hedges in Persian PhD theses. Another finding of this study is that there are similarities in the use of different categories of hedges used in English and Persian PhD theses and English and Persian MA theses. Finally, the results of this study showed generally the total number of hedges was higher in English PhD theses compared to Persian PhD theses but it was not statistically significant. And the total number of hedges was significantly higher in English MA theses in comparison to Persian MA theses. It showed that in MA Persian theses students preferred more assertive style of writing.

The results of Varttala's study (2001) showed that in abstract section of Economics research articles, "full verbs" and "nouns" were used more frequently, it abstract section of Medicine research articles, "full verbs" and "modal auxiliaries" were used more frequently and in abstract section of Technology research articles "adjectives" and "adverbs"

were used more frequently.

Atai and Sadr (2006) have done a cross- cultural study on hedging devices in discussion section of applied linguistics research articles. The results of their study show "full verbs" was the most frequently used hedge by both ENS writers and PNS writers. "Questions" were not used by PNS writers. "Nouns", "adjectives" and "other hedges" were used more frequently by PNS writers. "Modal auxiliaries" and "adverbs" were used more frequently by ENS writers.

Davoodifard (2006) has done a contrastive analysis of hedging in English and Persian research articles. She focused on linguistic and cultural variations across languages and disciplines.

According to her findings "modal auxiliaries ", “adverbs of indefinite degree", and "nonfactive reporting verbs" were used more frequently in English articles. In Persian articles, "modal auxiliaries ", "approximative adverbs" and "nonfactive reporting verbs" were used more frequently. Moreover, “approximative adjectives" were used least frequently in both Persian and English articles.

The results of her study also showed that there significant differences in the use of hedging devices. Persian writers seemed to be more assertive than English authors and they used less hedges. Moreover, English writers applied a wider variety of hedge types.

Jalilifar(2011) explored variations regarding the use of hedges in the discussion sections of articles written in Persian and English and published in Iranian as well as international scholarly journals in English Language Teaching and Psychiatry. The results of his study showed Persian-English and English writers generally used more hedges and almost double the Persian writers. English writers imply the greater caution in their claims when discussing their results. On the contrary, in Persian articles less hedges were used, it showed that Persian authors make more bald claims in discussions parts of their articles.

Alimorad and Sahragard (2012) analyzed the employment of hedges in research articles (RAs) written by Persian and English writer. The results of their study showed lexical hedges were used most frequently in both NS and PS articles and adverbs of frequency were used least frequently hedges in both of them .Moreover, PSs applied epistemic hedges, lexical hedges, assertive pronouns and adverbs of frequency less frequently than NSs did.

According to Alimorad and Sahragard (2012), it seems that PS writers’ use of hedges and Arab speakers use of these devices are similar to each other. Arabs do not consider high value for hedges and understatements in their classical Arabic prose (Hinkel, 2005 as cited in Alimorad & Sahragard, 2012).

As the results of these research projects showed different categories of hedges were used in different corpuses. This study showed that in MA Persian theses students preferred more assertive style of writing. This is in line with some other studies that are mentioned above showed that in Persian corpus more assertive style of writing were used than in English corpus.

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